

WEEK 1 (July 11th) – INTRODUCTION TO COLOSSIANS

(NO QUESTIONS FOR WEEK 1 – JUST READ)

AUTHOR: The apostle Paul, joined in his salutation by Timothy (**Col 1:1**), and signed by Paul himself at the end of the letter (**Col 4:18**).

THE CITY OF COLOSSE: The city was located about 100 miles east of Ephesus in Asia Minor (modern day Turkey). Together with Hierapolis (**Col 4:13**) and Laodicea (**Col 2:1; 4:13-16; Rev 3:14-22**), Colosse made up a tri-city area. Each city had its own distinction:

- Hierapolis, a place for health, pleasure, and relaxation
- Laodicea, known for its commercial trade and politics
- Colosse, known simply as a small town

Colosse was mostly a pagan city, with a strong intermingling of Jews (in 62 B.C., there were 11,000 Jewish freemen in the tri-city area). This may explain the nature of some of the problems that arose among the church in Colosse (problems with both pagan and Jewish origin).

THE CHURCH AT COLOSSE: The establishment of the church is uncertain. At issue is whether Paul himself had ever been there. Some suggest that Paul may have done some work there during his third journey, on the way to Ephesus. Others point out that Paul's comments imply that he had not personally been in Colosse (**Col 2:1**). One possibility is that the church was established during Paul's extended stay at Ephesus, where the effect of his work spread throughout Asia Minor (**Acts 19:8-10**). It may not have been Paul himself, but one of his co-workers who went out to Colosse. Paul's remarks in the epistle indicate that Epaphras was the one who preached the gospel there (**Col 1:5-8**) and in Hierapolis and Laodicea (**Col 4:12-13**). Though he was with Paul at the time the epistle was written, Epaphras is identified as "one of you" (**Col 4:12**), suggesting that he may have originally been from Colosse.

Other members of the church at Colosse included Philemon, Apphia, and Archippus, who may have been father, mother, and son.

By comparing the epistle to the Colossians with that written to Philemon, it is reasonable to suppose that the church at Colosse met in their home (**Col 4:17** with Philemon 1-2, and the references to Archippus). If Philemon and his family were hosts of the church at Colosse, then Onesimus (Philemon's slave) would have also been a member there upon his return (cf. **Col 4:7-9** with Philemon 8-16).

TIME AND PLACE OF WRITING: Colossians is one of Paul's four "prison epistles" (Col 4:18; cf. Ephesians, Philippians, and Philemon). The general consensus is that these epistles were written during Paul's imprisonment at Rome. If such is truly the case, then Paul wrote Colossians around 61-63 A.D. from Rome. The indication is that the epistles to the Colossians, Philemon and the Ephesians were carried to their destination by Tychicus and Onesimus (cf. Col 4:7-9; **Philemon 10-12; Ephesians 6:21-22**).

PURPOSE OF THE EPISTLE: Paul had received a report of the situation at Colosse by way of Epaphras (Col 1:7-8). This report was for the most part favorable (Col 2:5). But the subject matter in the epistle strongly suggests that the church was facing a two-fold danger:

- The danger of relapse into paganism with its gross immorality.
- The danger of accepting what has been come to known as **"The Colossian heresy"**. This heresy was a syncretism involving four elements of both pagan and Jewish origin:
- **Philosophies of men** - which denied the all sufficiency and pre-eminence of Christ (Col 2:8)
- **Judaistic ceremonialism** - which attached special significance to the rite of circumcision, food regulations, and observance of special days (Col 2;11,16-17)
- **Angel worship** - which detracted from the uniqueness of Christ (Col 2:18)
- **Asceticism** - which called for harsh treatment of the body as the means to control its lusts (Col 2:20-23)

To guard against these dangers, Paul writes to:

- Warn the Colossians against relapse (Col 1:21-23)
- Warn them against the "solution" being urged upon them by those denying the all-sufficiency of Christ (Col 2:8-23)
- Direct their attention to the "Beloved Son", the "All-Sufficient and Pre-Eminent Savior" (Col 1:13-18; **2:8-10**)

THEME OF THE EPISTLE: With the focus on Jesus Christ as the answer to the "Colossian heresy", the theme of this letter is clearly:

CHRIST – THE FULNESS OF GOD, AND THE PRE-EMINENT, ALL- SUFFICIENT SAVIOR

KEY VERSES: Colossians 2:9-10

"For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power."

I. **WEEK 2 (July 18th) - Colossians 1:1-14 - Introduction**

1. Who wrote the letter to the Colossians? (1:1)
2. Who was with Paul when he wrote this letter? (1:1)
3. How did Paul address the Colossian Christians? (1:2)
4. How did Paul greet his audience? (1:2)
5. Why did Paul offer prayers of thanksgiving for the Colossians? (1:3-4)
6. From what source did the believers' faith and love spring? (1:5)
7. What did Paul stress about the gospel? (1:5-6)
8. Who taught the gospel to the Colossians? (1:7)
9. How did Paul describe Epaphras? (1:7)
10. What did Epaphras tell Paul and Timothy about the Colossians? (1:7-8)
11. What was Paul's primary prayer for these Christians? (1:9)
12. What results did Paul want for the Colossians? (1:10)
13. How could the church at Colosse have spiritual strength? (1:11-12)
14. How has God qualified the believer to share in the inheritance of the saints? (1:12-14)
15. What is the power of darkness?
16. What is redemption and what did it accomplished for the believer?

II. **WEEK 3 (July 25th) - Colossians 1:15-23 - The Preeminence of Christ**

1. What is Christ's relationship to God? (1:15)
2. What is Christ's relationship to Creation? (1:15-17)
3. How is it that "in Him all things consist"? (1:16-17)
4. What is Christ's relationship to the church? (1:18)
5. Why is the resurrection of Jesus fundamental to our faith? (1:18)
6. How did Paul explain the deity of Christ? (1:19)
7. What did God achieve through the work of His Son? (1:20)
8. How did Christ bring us to God? (1:21-22)
9. Why was reconciliation necessary? (1:21-22)
10. What is a Christian's position before God? (1:22)
11. What is the role of faith in reconciliation with God? (1:23)
12. What kind of faith did the Colossians have? (1:23)

III. **WEEK 4 (Aug 1st) - Colossians 1:24-2:7 - The Apostle of Christ**

1. What was Paul willing to do for the sake of the church? (1:24)
2. What commission did God give Paul? (1:25)
3. To what mystery did Paul refer? (1:26)
4. To whom had God chosen to make known this mystery? (1:27)
5. How did Paul help believers become spiritually mature? (1:28-29)
6. What did Paul want his audience to know? (2:1)
7. What was Paul's stated purpose? (2:2-3)
8. What is hidden in Christ? (2:3)
9. How would a commitment to the full knowledge of Christ protect the Colossians? (2:4)
10. What was Paul's reason for rejoicing? (2:5)
11. How did Paul tell the Colossians to continue in Christ? (2:6-7)

IV. **WEEK 5 (Aug 8th) - Colossians 2:8-23 - Warnings Against the “Colossian Heresy”**

1. What false teaching was Paul concerned about? (2:8)
2. What are the “basic principles of this world”? (2:8)
3. What did Paul affirm about Christ? (2:9-10)
4. What did God give the Colossian believers? (2:10)
5. Why do Gentile Christians have no need to conform to Jewish rules and regulations? (2:11-12)
6. How did the Cross wipe out the hand writing of requirements that was against us? (2:13-14)
7. From what did Christ deliver us? (2:15-17)
8. How did Paul encourage the Colossians to practice their freedom in Christ? (2:16)
9. What were the characteristics of the false teachers? (2:18-19)
10. What are the failings of human commands and teachings? (2:20-23)

V. WEEK 6 (Aug 15th) - Colossians 3:1-17 - The Christian Solution

1. Where did Paul tell the Colossians to turn their attention? (3:1)
2. Where did Paul tell the believers to focus their concern? (3:2)
3. What was the Colossians' security? (3:3)
4. Why should believers look forward to Christ's return? (3:4)
5. What evil activities does God seek to eliminate from our lives? (3:5)
6. Why is God's wrath coming, and upon who will it come? (3:5-6)
7. What did the Colossians need to take off? (3:7-9)
8. What did the Colossians need to put on? (3:10)
9. What distinctions are removed in Christ? (3:11)
10. What virtues does God seek to plant in us? (3:12, 14)
11. How were the Colossian believers called to clothe themselves? (3:12-17)
12. Why did Paul call on the believers to be peaceful and thankful? (3:15-16)
13. What is one principle that ought to guide everything we do? (3:17)

VI. **WEEK 7 (Aug 22nd) - Colossians 3:18-4:1 - The Christian Relationships**

1. What is the responsibility of the wives? (3:18)
 - a. What does it mean to submit to your husband?
 - b. How has this teaching been abused in our day?
 - c. Why should they submit?
2. What is the responsibility of the husbands? (3:19)
 - a. What kind of love is this?
 - b. How will this affect the way the wife submits to her husband?
 - c. In what ways can husbands be harsh with their wives?
 - d. Why does God tell husbands not to be harsh with their wives?
3. How should children respond to parents? (3:20)
 - a. Why does obedience to parents please the Lord? (3:20)
4. Of what do fathers need to be careful? (3:21)
 - b. How can children become discouraged? (3:21)
5. What directives did Paul give bondservants? (3:22-25)
6. How were bondservants called on to serve Christ? (3:23-24)
7. How would God impart justice in the master- bondservant relationship? (3:25)
8. What instructions did Paul give masters? (4:1)
9. What insight did Paul give masters? (4:1)

VII. **WEEK 8 (Aug 29th) - Colossians 4:2-18 - Living as a Christian Community**

1. What did Paul encourage all believers to do? (4:2)
2. What does Paul mean when he exhorts the believers to be “Vigilant and thankful”?
 - a. What are we watching for?
 - b. What should we be thankful for?
3. What request did Paul make of his readers? (4:3-4)
4. What did Paul say about the Christian’s public life? (4:5-6)
 - a. What does it mean to have our conversation seasoned with salt?
5. What can we do to be better prepared to answer people when they ask us questions about our faith?
6. In advancing the Gospel (vv.2-6), what role is played by prayer?
7. Who was Tychicus? (4:7)
 - a. Why did Paul send Tychicus to Colosse? (4:7-8)
8. Who was Onesimus? (4:9) What do you know about Onesimus (see Philemon. 10-16)?
9. What did Epaphras do on behalf of his church at Colosse? (4:12-13)
10. What instruction did Paul send Archippus? (4:17)
11. How did Paul conclude his letter? (4:18)
 - a. Why do you think he mentioned that he wrote the greeting with his own hand?